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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5447
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0039
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3631
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7137
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0736
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2948
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0611
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001717

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD REACTS TO GAMBARI VISIT

REF: RANGOON 700

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a short meeting with U/SYG Gambari during his November 9-12 visit to Burma, the NLD "Uncles" repeated their desire for a genuine dialogue with the regime. They told us Gambari seemed better briefed on the political situation in Burma this visit, in contrast to their meeting with him last May (reftel), and that this time he did not urge the NLD to re-join the National Convention. Gambari told them that the UN could only monitor any future referendum on a new constitution at the invitation of the ruling government, and asked them whether they supported the opening of a UN office in Rangoon to manage UN political work. The NLD Uncles have tried to reach out to other countries, especially China, India, and Japan, but have received no response to their initial overtures. End summary.

¶2. (C) During a November 14 meeting with pol/econ chief, the NLD senior executives (a.k.a. the Uncles) stated they were "more satisfied" with their meeting with Gambari than their session with him during his first visit to Burma. In contrast to the May meeting, the Uncles found Gambari more prepared and better informed about the background of the NLD, the SPDC, and Burma's political situation. Gambari did not urge them this time to rejoin the National Convention or raise the regime's long-delayed "seven-step roadmap to democracy." The Uncles said they believe Gambari is sincere in wanting to move the regime towards democracy, but they expressed doubt that his visits will produce any tangible results. The Uncles said, "If Gambari believes the National Convention is a viable way to move forward, then he is mistaken. The National Convention in its current form has no trace of democracy and has been manipulated by the military solely for their benefit."

¶3. (C) The Uncles repeated their request to engage in a genuine dialogue with the regime and asked Gambari what role the UN could play in ensuring any future referendum held by the regime met internationally accepted standards. Gambari explained the UN could only monitor a referendum at the request of the government in power. The UN would also need approval of the General Assembly and the agreement of the UN Security Council. Emboff asked whether Gambari had shared

any details of his meeting with Than Shwe and Maung Aye. The Uncles said Gambari had only told them Than Shwe professed to being committed to proceeding with the seven-step roadmap. The Uncles told emboff that their chief concern now is what Gambari will say when he briefs the UN Security Council.

14. (C) The Uncles told us that Gambari raised with them the possibility of establishing an office for a UN representative in Rangoon to handle political affairs for the UN, while UN Resident Representative Charles Petrie would continue to focus on humanitarian assistance issues. Gambari merely raised this suggestion and did not discuss any details, noted the Uncles. While they support such an idea in principle, the Uncles told us they feel the UN really needs a local office empowered to make policy recommendations directly to the Security Council and not only through Gambari's office. The Uncles criticized Rangoon-based UN staff as lacking the motivation to take actions needed to support true national reconciliation. "They are only good for passing messages to UN headquarters," the Uncles said. They said that only the UNSC will have the clout and power to move the regime toward any kind of meaningful compromise.

15. (C) The Uncles relayed their desire to reach out more to representatives of other countries, especially the Chinese. They revealed that they recently sent a letter to the Chinese Ambassador, hoping to establish a dialogue. The letter stated that the NLD was not working to remove the ruling government, but was simply trying to participate in establishing a more democratic process. The Chinese Ambassador has not responded. The Uncles lamented that representatives from the Indian Embassy have never visited their headquarters, and that the Japanese had not come in

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over a year. They said that the Koreans from time-to-time extended them dinner invitations, and confirmed that the UK Ambassador has not been to see them since he made his introductory call.

16. Comment: While the Uncles are often criticized for being out-of-touch and irrelevant, they are the de facto leaders of Aung San Suu Kyi's party and represent the largest opposition group in Burma. The regime has done everything it can to undermine the NLD's political base, but the party still retains strong public support. the aging Uncles have less support, but only ASSK can make changes in the leadership structure. This, no doubt, is part of the military's plan: keep the articulate, charismatic leader muzzled and hope that the people drift away from the party. Regardless of the Uncles, the NLD won overwhelming support from the Burmese people. The military can make no such claim. If offered the choice between democracy and the military today, the Burmese people would still choose democracy. End comment.
VILLAROSA